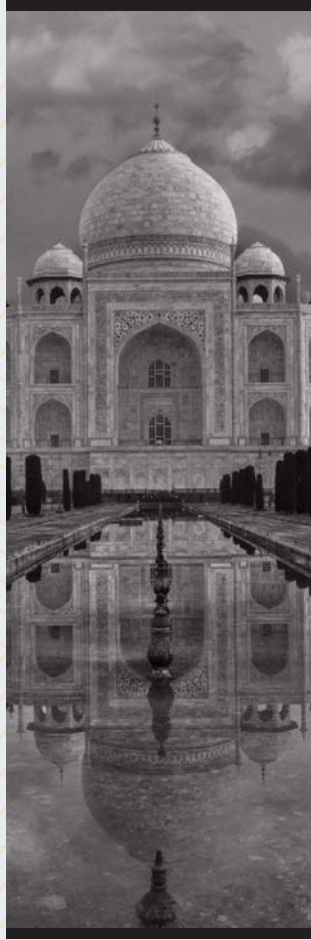


DECODING INDIA 2024-25



LOOKING EAST: STEERING THROUGH RESURGENCE

EAST INDIA: BIHAR, JHARKHAND, CHHATTISGARH, ODISHA, WEST BENGAL, ASSAM, MEGHALAYA, ARUNACHAL PRADESH, MANIPUR, MIZORAM, NAGALAND, TRIPURA, SIKKIM



FUZION
PUBLIC RELATIONS

 **SCoReInsights**

INTRODUCTION

India is going “Glocal 2.0”. As consumers lean towards regional content, and PR houses have sharper tools like Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems & marketing platforms with segmentation capabilities, dynamic content platforms, and social media ad targeting at their disposal, the ecosystem to create and consume is rapidly evolving.

Regional public relations plays a vital role in the relationship between brands and consumers and offers customised, deeper engagement avenues not just in diverse languages, but different geographies, platforms and consumer segments.

The third of a four-part series covering India's regional public relations, with a focus on the East, which for the sake of this paper comprises the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.

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FOREWORD

I take pride in introducing this whitepaper, “Looking East: Steering Through Resurgence,” a collaborative effort between Fuzion PR and SCoRe Insights. This document delves into Eastern India—a region experiencing a remarkable economic revival, cultural renaissance, and a rapidly transforming digital landscape.

In today’s era, the efficacy of PR strategies hinges on understanding and capitalising on the evolving patterns of consumer behaviour and global economic shifts. The average consumer today is now more informed, conscious and inspired than ever before. India’s growth story has spread to semi-urban and rural areas, companies must look to these regions for their next billion consumers.

This whitepaper offers a comprehensive analysis of Eastern India’s dynamic consumer market, forecasting key trends that will shape its future trajectory. The research process for this study has been both illuminating and thought-provoking, revealing how Regional PR can leverage local nuances to craft compelling narratives and strategies in Eastern India.

We are confident that our analysis provides valuable insights into the trends and preferences that will influence this market. By harnessing these insights, businesses can pivot, refresh their brand, and get creative with their PR, ensuring they remain competitive in Eastern India’s resurgent economic landscape.



**MUKESH
KHARBANDA**
MANAGING DIRECTOR, FUZION PR

PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this whitepaper, “Looking East – Steering through Resurgence” , a collaboration between Fuzion PR and SCoRe Insights. This document explores Eastern India—a region steeped in history, now ready to take off.

We are in an age where we are competing for the consumer’s attention which spans in seconds, on various platforms at the same time. It is pertinent that we go beyond generic messaging to craft bespoke experiences and forge deeper, meaningful connections with them. This is where regional messaging is being layered upon customer segmentation as we know it, making it culturally resonate with the consumer.

In this whitepaper, we have explored the East, which was once home to India’s industrial revolution, and is now witnessing a resurgence. The findings draw attention to the regional economic drivers, demographics, and emerging media trends in the Eastern part of India, all of which are important for effective upper-funnel view metrics. We also examine cultural nuances which help build trust and relatability amongst consumers.

We are confident that our findings and analysis offer valuable insights into the trends and preferences that will influence the market. In a space that calls for constant innovation, leveraging these insights can help businesses explore and understand their consumers better, trends, challenges and opportunities that lie in India’s East zone.



HEMANT GAULE
DEAN, SCHOOL OF
COMMUNICATIONS & REPUTATION

Public relations in India is not just about communication; it is the bridge that connects diverse cultures, languages, and local narratives, transforming national brands into beloved community icons. The Regional factor in every brand's Integrated Communications and Marketing Strategy plays a huge role in brand-consumer dynamics. From Bira's 'Culture Connect – Imagined in India'¹ campaign, to Swiggy Instamart's regional language marketing,² we observe multifaceted dimensions of this phenomenon, of the interplay between linguistic diversity, digital penetration, consumer demands and socio-economic factors driving this change. It also draws to the synergy between marketing and advertising which industry experts believe continues to get closer.³

Navigating this intricate, complex tapestry of India's multilingual milieu is an uphill task for any PR firm, given India's 22 official languages and hundreds of myriad dialects, matched with an unprecedented surge in the demand for content in regional languages. This linguistic fragmentation, spiced with the exponential growth of digital penetration in tier 2 and tier 3 urban centres, has given rise to a new set of PR strategies. There is a shift from a siloed, centralised approach to a customized, nuanced, localized communication model.

The role of emerging technologies and digital platforms is also significant in democratizing PR outreach, enabling brands to transcend these geographical constraints and engage with once-untapped market segments. This digital revolution is not merely a facilitator but a catalyst in the evolution of Regional PR, bringing new modalities of engagement and metrics of success.

"The Indian PR market is built on the back of many Indias that exist within it" is a wonderful way to sum up the landscape.⁴ Over the last 4 years, the advertising industry has seen a 35% increase in vernacular messaging.⁵

The third instalment of a four-part series on Regional PR in India, this white paper delves into the captivating web of challenges and opportunities that this shift presents, with a focus on the East Zone of India, exploring the relationship between cultural relevance and brand resonance, often symbiotic. We examine how judicious leveraging of regional PR can generate quality brand equity and deeper connections with target demographics through culturally attuned messaging.

For this paper, the East Zone comprises the geographical areas of the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, **Orissa**, West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim. These states form a diverse and historically significant region – from the Bengal presidency to Buddha's home in Bihar, Ashoka's Kalinga battle to Assam's Kaziranga – ancient trade links and economic centres that developed along major rivers and coastal areas, such as Kolkata, Patna, Guwahati, and Bhubaneswar.

ECONOMIC DRIVERS AND OUTLOOK

27% of India's population calls this geography their home, with a majority speaking Bengali, Hindi, Assamese, Odia, and other regional languages. The region is well-connected by an extensive network of railways and roads, including National Highways and State Highways, as well as important waterways and ports. Eastern India has a varied literacy rate, with some states like Mizoram (91.33%) and Tripura (87.75%) surpassing the national average of 74.04%, while others like Bihar (63.82%) lag behind.⁶ The zone is experiencing rapid economic growth and transformation, particularly in sectors like agri-tech, mineral-based industries, and education.

"In today's PR landscape, we must navigate the rise of digital media while acknowledging the influence of traditional outlets. Our approach should be grounded in a deep understanding and respect for local languages, social dynamics, and cultural nuances. Implementing strategic CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and HSE (Health, Safety, and Environment) initiatives is crucial, as is fostering relationships with local influencers. Above all, we must maintain rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes to stay ahead in this ever-evolving field", explains Priyanshu Mohanty, Corporate Communication Officer, Interview Times.



1. <https://scoreindia.org/blog/successful-pr-campaign-of-india-2023/>
2. <https://www.livemint.com/companies/news/swiggy-instamart-launches-regional-ad-campaign-11669367810900.html>
3. https://media.muckrack.com/documents/Muck_Rack_-_State_of_PR_2024.pdf
4. <https://www.impactonnet.com/cover-story/brands-that-speak-your-language-7949.html>
5. <https://reputationtoday.in/regional-pr-more-relevant-now-than-ever/>

6. http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Final_PPT_2011_chapter6.pdf

BIHAR AND JHARKHAND

Bihar and Jharkhand present contrasting economic landscapes in eastern India. Bihar's economy is primarily agrarian, with agriculture accounting for 24% of its GDP. Its GSDP for 2024-25 is projected at \$11.77 billion.⁷ Jharkhand, rich in mineral resources, focuses on mining, steel, and power generation industries. Key industrial centres include Jamshedpur, Ranchi, and Bokaro. Jharkhand's GSDP for 2024-25 is estimated at \$5.67 billion, with a growth rate of 9.8%.⁸ Both states face infrastructure challenges but are working on improvements. Bihar is promoting food processing and textile industries through various schemes like the "7 Nischay Yojana", Bihar Textile Policy, and Development of a dedicated Integrated Manufacturing Cluster amongst other policies.⁹ Jharkhand is attracting investments in IT and food processing sectors through recent policy changes that aim to generate 500,000 jobs and attract \$1.2 billion in investments.¹⁰ Bihar's per capita income stands at \$925 (2024 est.),¹¹ while Jharkhand's is \$1188 (2022-23), indicating regional economic disparities. Bihar and Jharkhand have robust water infrastructure with 1,699 km of inland waterways in Bihar, while both states are improving their rail networks, with Bihar having 3,714 km of rail routes and Jharkhand seeing significant expansion with 29 new rail projects worth \$79.52 million inaugurated recently; road infrastructure is also developing, with Bihar having 5,412 km of national highways and Jharkhand's national highway network expanding from 2,402 km in 2014 to 7,791 km in 2018.¹²



7. <https://prsindia.org/budgets/states/bihar-budget-analysis-2024-25>
8. <https://prsindia.org/budgets/states/jharkhand-budget-analysis-2024-25>
9. <https://instituteofpublicservices.com/2024/02/16/bihar-economic-survey-2023-24/>
10. <https://www.nsws.gov.in/s3fs/2022-10/Jharkhand%20Industrial%20and%20Investment%20Policy%202021.pdf>
11. <https://esankhyiki.mospi.gov.in/catalogue-main/catalogue/tableview/66d6b4e7cd607200938d913e>
12. <https://morth.nic.in/sites/default/files/PragatiKiNayiGati/pdf/jharkhand.pdf>

CHHATTISGARH

Chhattisgarh contributes approximately 1.713% to India's GDP as of 2024, through a diversified economy, not reliant on agriculture. With 50.61% of revenues from industry, 32.66% from services and 16.73% from agriculture,¹³ the state has also made significant progress in human development indicators. Chhattisgarh's literacy rate stands at 70.28%, according to the latest census, while the gender ratio is 991 females per 1,000 males, which is above the national average of 940. Chhattisgarh's economy has been growing steadily, with the state's average annual GDP growth rate at 11.5% in constant prices, outpacing the national GDP growth rate of 9.2%.¹⁴ The state's GDP increased from \$30.04 million in 2020-21 to \$33.55 million in 2021-22, representing a growth of 11.54%.¹⁵ The state's per capita GSDP in 2022-23 (at current prices) is estimated at \$1,794.¹⁶ Chhattisgarh has been focusing on infrastructure development to support its economic growth. Recently, the state government launched or laid the foundation for 7,300 projects worth \$731.33 million across 26 districts.¹⁷ These projects include urban development initiatives and improvements in railway and road infrastructure. A foundation for three national highway projects on the six-lane greenfield Raipur-Visakhapatnam corridor has been laid. It is also among the leading states in India in terms of maintenance and renovation of roads constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, with 8,193 roads covering a length of 40,234 km completed since the scheme's introduction.¹⁸ The state government is actively promoting industrial growth, as evidenced by the recent inauguration of an ethanol plant in Kabirdham district, built for \$169.88 million under a Public Private Partnership (PPP).¹⁹



13. https://prsindia.org/files/budget/budget_state/chhattisgarh/2024/Chhattisgarh_Budget_Analysis-2024-25.pdf
14. https://prsindia.org/files/budget/budget_state/chhattisgarh/2024/Chhattisgarh_Budget_Analysis-2024-25.pdf
15. https://prsindia.org/files/budget/budget_state/chhattisgarh/2024/Chhattisgarh_Budget_Analysis-2024-25.pdf
16. https://prsindia.org/files/budget/budget_state/chhattisgarh/2024/Chhattisgarh_Budget_Analysis-2024-25.pdf
17. <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/infrastructure-chhattisgarh-from-urban-development-to-railway-infrastructure-how-the-state-has-developed-in-recent-times-3265096/>
18. <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/infrastructure-chhattisgarh-from-urban-development-to-railway-infrastructure-how-the-state-has-developed-in-recent-times-3265096/>
19. <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/infrastructure-chhattisgarh-from-urban-development-to-railway-infrastructure-how-the-state-has-developed-in-recent-times-3265096/>

ODISHA

Odisha is on a rapid economic growth path with a projected GSDP growth rate of 10.57% for 2023–24.²⁰ The state's economy is transitioning from agriculture-based to industry and service-sector, with agriculture contributing 21%, industry 43%, and services 36% to the GSDP in 2023–24.²¹ Key industries include mining, steel and aluminium production. Odisha holds approximately one-third (around 33%) of India's total iron ore reserves and contributes about 55% of the country's total iron ore production (as of 2022–23).²² The state has implemented policies to attract investments, receiving \$5.96 billion in investment proposals in 2011–12.²³ Infrastructure development is ongoing, with the Odisha Economic Corridor comprising 11 industrial clusters spanning 600 km along National Highway 16.²⁴ The state's per capita income has risen to \$1,900 in 2023–24.²⁵ However, challenges remain, including a poverty rate of 11.07% (2022–23)²⁶ and the need for continued infrastructure improvements. Odisha's focus on mineral-based industries and emerging sectors like IT and tourism is driving its economic growth.



20. <https://finance.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-07/03-OES%202023-24%20Main%20Booklet.pdf>
 21. <https://finance.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-07/03-OES%202023-24%20Main%20Booklet.pdf>
 22. <https://finance.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-07/03-OES%202023-24%20Main%20Booklet.pdf>
 23. <https://finance.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-07/03-OES%202023-24%20Main%20Booklet.pdf>
 24. <https://finance.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-07/03-OES%202023-24%20Main%20Booklet.pdf>
 25. <https://finance.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-07/03-OES%202023-24%20Main%20Booklet.pdf>
 26. <https://finance.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-07/03-OES%202023-24%20Main%20Booklet.pdf>

WEST BENGAL

West Bengal has significant infrastructure across sea, rail, and road networks. The state has two major ports: Kolkata Port (including Haldia Dock Complex) and the upcoming Tajpur Port. Kolkata Port, India's only riverine port, has seen increased cargo volume, handling 66.4 metric tonnes of cargo in 2023–24 – a record since 1870.²⁷ The proposed Tajpur deep-sea port, a \$3.1 billion project, aims to enhance the state's maritime capabilities with a 12.1 m deep draft and an 18 km channel.²⁸ Rail infrastructure in West Bengal spans 4,431 km, connecting major cities and industrial hubs. The state's road network is extensive, featuring 2,377 km of National Highways and 2,393 km of State Highways.²⁹ Significant Road projects include the Eastern Link Highway from Barasat to Raichak and two four-lane bridges across the Hooghly and Haldi rivers, improving connectivity between Kolkata and Haldia. West Bengal has shown significant economic growth in recent years. The state's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) grew at 12.82% in 2021–22, outpacing the national average of 9.18%.³⁰ West Bengal's economy is diverse, with agriculture contributing 19.41%, industry 23.07%, and services 57.52% to GSDP in 2023–24.³¹ Key industries include coal, steel, manufacturing, IT, and textiles. The state has implemented several policies to boost economic growth, including the West Bengal Industrial Development Strategy 2020 and the Bengal Silicon Valley Tech Hub project. However, challenges remain, as the state's relative economic performance has declined over several decades.³² Despite these challenges, the state government has introduced initiatives like the "Lakshmir Bhandar" scheme for women's financial support and the "Swasthya Sathi" health insurance program.³³ West Bengal's focus on improving infrastructure, attracting investments, and promoting sectors like IT and finance aims to address its economic challenges and boost growth potential.



27. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseFramePage.aspx?PRID=2017210#:~:text=In%20its%20154%20year%20history,record%20of%2065.66%20million%20tonnes>
 28. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/adani-ports-secures-25-000-crore-port-project-in-west-bengal-11663762086643.html>
 29. https://image.mfa.go.th/mfa/0/b3efD5AtCa/migrate_directory/information-20120627-115207-599586.pdf
 30. https://finance.wb.gov.in/writereaddata/Economic_Review/Economic_Review21.pdf
 31. https://finance.wb.gov.in/writereaddata/Economic_Review/Economic_Review21.pdf
 32. https://eacpm.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/State-GDP-Working-Paper_Final.pdf
 33. https://image.mfa.go.th/mfa/0/b3efD5AtCa/migrate_directory/information-20120627-115207-599586.pdf

ASSAM

Assam contributes approximately 2.6% to India's GDP and has made notable progress in human development indicators, with a literacy rate of 73.18% and a gender ratio of 958 females per 1,000 males.³⁴ The state serves as a crucial gateway to Northeast India, featuring strong infrastructure that includes 3,882 km of National Highways and 2,540 km of railways, and **9 major airports**— one international, six domestic, and two military.³⁵ Assam's economy has been growing steadily, with a GSDP CAGR of 12.82% from 2011-12 to 2021-22 and a per capita income of \$1,900 in 2023-24.³⁶ The tea industry is a major economic driver, producing over 50% of India's tea, while oil and natural gas reserves further bolster the economy. The government promotes industrial growth through initiatives like the North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS), focusing on sectors such as food processing and IT. With its strategic location and rich resources, Assam is set for significant economic development.



34. https://eodbttest.assam.statedatacenter.in/site/infrastructure_development

35. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1945404>

36. <https://www.india-briefing.com/news/indias-northeast-region-scope-for-investment-in-fast-developing-states-26036.html/>

NORTHEASTERN STATES

The Northeastern states of India – Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim – present a unique economic landscape characterized by rich natural resources and cultural diversity.³⁷ These states contribute approximately 2.8% to India's GDP, with an impressive annual growth rate exceeding 8% in the last two decades.³⁸ The region's economy remains primarily agrarian, with significant contributions from forestry, handloom, handicraft, and tourism sectors. Despite historical marginalization due to geographical isolation, the states have shown economic improvements, with Sikkim and Manipur growing fastest among Indian states. Each state shows unique economic characteristics: Arunachal Pradesh has impressive per capita income growth, Mizoram stands out for environmental conservation, and the region shows strong potential in industrial growth, particularly in the tea and hydrocarbon industries.³⁹ The region's strategic location connecting India to Southeast Asian markets offers significant investment potential, with cheaper labour costs and abundant natural resources.



37. <https://www.policycircle.org/economy/economy-of-northeastern-states/>

38. <https://www.india-briefing.com/news/indias-northeast-region-scope-for-investment-in-fast-developing-states-26036.html/>

39. <https://www.india-briefing.com/news/indias-northeast-region-scope-for-investment-in-fast-developing-states-26036.html/>

CONSUMER INSIGHTS

- REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE
- PURCHASING POWER
- SPENDING PATTERNS

“Smart strategy begins with granular insights: What platforms dominate local conversations? How do audiences consume and share content? By leveraging social listening and advanced analytics, CCOs can craft narratives that feel authentically local, not just translated. Cultural resonance is key. This means more than language translation—it’s about understanding subtle communication rhythms, visual preferences, and storytelling traditions unique to each market. Collaborating with local influencers and media experts transforms external messaging into genuine dialogue”, details Ankita Moharana, Lead Account Manager, JB Consulting and Strategies.



India’s growth story is poised to be marked by resilience and opportunity, despite the challenges from a threatening global slowdown and steadfast inflation. India will maintain its position as one of the fastest-growing major economies, its growth coming from domestic demand and encouraging fiscal-economic policies. The average consumer in India is changing, engaging in leisure, discretionary spending and value-based buying.⁴⁰ Between 2018 and 2022, the proportion of households with smartphones has doubled from 36% to 74.8%.⁴¹

“Smart strategy begins with granular insights: What platforms dominate local conversations? How do audiences consume and share content? By leveraging social listening and advanced analytics, CCOs can craft narratives that feel authentically local, not just translated. Cultural resonance is key. This means more than language translation—it is about understanding subtle communication rhythms, visual preferences, and storytelling traditions unique to each market. Collaborating with local influencers and media experts transforms external messaging into genuine dialogue”, details Ankita Moharana, Lead Account Manager, JB Consulting and Strategies.

Bihar and Jharkhand exhibit distinct consumer dynamics influenced by their demographic profiles and economic conditions. Bihar, with a population of over 124 million, has a per capita income of \$720 for 2022–23,⁴² while Jharkhand’s per capita income is approximately \$1,200 as of 2023–24.⁴³ The purchasing power in both states remains low compared to national averages, leading to frugal spending patterns focused on essentials. In Bihar, about 80% of the population relies on agriculture, labour and other blue-collar jobs⁴⁴ which shapes the consumption towards food and basic goods. Conversely, Jharkhand’s growing industrial base has led to increased spending on consumer goods and services.⁴⁵

Demographics & Economy	Bihar	Jharkhand	Chhattisgarh
Population (2024)	13,10,40,000	4,11,07,000	N.A
GSDP (2024–25)	N.A	NA	\$33.55 million
Economic Growth Rate	7.5% (2010s)	N.A	11.54% (2021–22)
Per Capita Income (2024–25)	<\$800	\$718.43 (2022–23)	N.A
Sex Ratio (females per 1000 males)	991	N.A	991
Rural Population	88% (2011)	N.A	N.A
Urban Population	12% (2011)	N.A	N.A
Female Labour Force Participation Rate	22% (2023)	N.A	N.A
Literacy Rate	61.80%	66.41%	70.28%
Male Literacy Rate	N.A	76.84%	N.A
Female Literacy Rate	N.A	55.42%	N.A

18. <https://www.goldmansachs.com/intelligence/pages/how-india-could-rise-to-the-worlds-second-biggest-economy.html>
19. https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/data-visualizations/Age-Gender-Ratio_Pyramid-Chart

40. <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/in/Documents/consumer-business/in-cb-future-of-retail-2024-final-noexp.pdf>
41. <https://asercentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/aserreport2022-1.pdf>
42. <https://instituteofpublicservices.com/2024/02/16/bihar-economic-survey-2023-24/>
43. <https://static.investindia.gov.in/s3fs-public/2024-03/Jharkhand%20Economic%20Survey%202023-24.pdf>
44. <https://web.archive.org/web/20110303181352/http://industries.bih.nic.in/Slides01/Presentation.pdf>
45. https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Factsheet_HCES_2022-23.pdf

"In our PR strategy, we try to adopt a bilingual approach, communicating in both Odia, the regional language, and English, while we conduct comprehensive research about the region to inform our efforts. Our messaging should emphasize the importance of coordination and teamwork, and also being attuned to nonverbal communication cues. We must develop a nuanced understanding of the cultural landscape to ensure our initiatives resonate authentically. Finally, we'll execute our plans meticulously and prioritize gathering feedback to continually refine our approach", details Mohanty.

Odisha, with a population of approximately 41.97 million, has a diverse demographic profile, with 83% residing in rural areas. The state's per capita income is around \$870 for 2023-24,⁴⁶ reflecting moderate purchasing power. Spending patterns are primarily focused on essentials, with about 62% of the workforce engaged in agriculture, influenced by food and basic goods consumption. However, urban areas like Bhubaneswar and Cuttack are witnessing increased spending on consumer goods and services, driven by rising incomes and improved infrastructure.⁴⁷ The state's emphasis on tourism and handicrafts also shapes consumer behaviour, promoting local products.

Demographics & Economy	
Population (2024)	48.27 million
GSDP (2024-25)	\$114.46 billion
Economic Growth Rate (2024-25)	7.2%
Per Capita Income (2024-25)	\$2,196.79
Sex Ratio (females per 1000 males)	979
Labour Force Participation Rate (age 15+)	64.9%
Female Labour Force Participation Rate (age 15+)	49.4%
Rural Population	83.31%
Urban Population	16.69%
Food Grain Production (2023-24)	143 lakh metric tonnes
Rice Production (2023-24)	115.4 lakh metric tonnes

"In mobile-first regions, visual storytelling reigns supreme. Strategies must prioritize mobile-optimized, visually compelling content that cuts through digital noise. Short-form videos, interactive graphics, and mobile-friendly formats have become communication currencies", Moharana adds.

West Bengal, with a population of approximately 103.5 million in 2024, is India's fourth most populous state.⁴⁸ The state's demographic profile is diverse, with Bengalis forming the majority, alongside significant minority communities such as Marwaris, Biharis, and Oriyas. The literacy rate stands at 77.08%, higher than the national average of 74.04%.⁴⁹ West Bengal's per capita income for 2023-24 is estimated at \$1,470,⁵⁰ which is below the national average, indicating moderate purchasing power. The state's GSDP for 2023-24 is projected at \$206.99 billion, making it the sixth-largest state economy in India.⁵¹ Spending patterns in West Bengal reflect a mix of traditional and evolving consumer behaviours. While rural areas, comprising 72% of the population, focus on essential goods and agriculture-related spending, urban centres like Kolkata are witnessing increased consumer

46. <https://pc.odisha.gov.in/publication/economic-survey-report>

47. https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Factsheet_HCES_2022-23.pdf

48. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/cities/india/west-bengal>

49. <https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol20-issue9/Version-3/A020930119.pdf>

50. https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Factsheet_HCES_2022-23.pdf

51. <https://prindia.org/budgets/states/west-bengal-budget-analysis-2023-24#:~:text=The%20Gross%20State%20Domestic%20Product,revised%20estimates%20of%202022%2D23>

goods and services consumption. The state has seen a rise in digital transactions, with key sectors driving consumer spending including food and beverages, textiles, and increasingly, technology and education-related products.

Demographics & Economy	
Population (2024)	10.49 million
GSDP (2024-25)	\$226.51 billion
Economic Growth Rate (2024-25)	6.8%
Per Capita Income (2024-25)	\$2,267.71
Sex Ratio (females per 1000 males)	947
Rural Population	68.13%
Urban Population	31.87%
Labour Force Participation Rate (urban, age 15+, Jul-Sep 2024)	50.4%
Female Labour Force Participation Rate (2022-23)	27.4%
Rice Production (2023)	15,480,000 tonnes
Social Progress Index Score	53.13
SPI Rank	24
SPI Tier	Tier 4: Lower Middle Social Progress
Average Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) Rural	\$49.64
Average Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) Urban	\$84.20
Literacy Rate	77.08%
Male Literacy Rate	77.85%
Female Literacy Rate	66.27%

Assam, with a population of approximately 35.7 million in 2023, is characterized by a predominantly rural demographic, with 86% of its population residing in rural areas. The state's literacy rate stands at 72.19%, with a notable gender gap (male literacy 77.85%, female 66.27%). Assam's per capita income for 2022-23 was estimated at \$1,435, indicating moderate purchasing power compared to national averages. Consumer spending patterns reflect the rural-urban divide, with a focus on essential



"In mobile-first regions, visual storytelling reigns supreme. Strategies must prioritize mobile-optimized, visually compelling content that cuts through digital noise. Short-form videos, interactive graphics, and mobile-friendly formats have become communication currencies", Moharana adds.

goods in rural areas. Urban centres like Guwahati are witnessing increased consumption of consumer goods and services. The state's economy is largely agrarian, influencing spending towards food and necessities. However, there's a growing trend in digital transactions, with a 30% increase reported in recent years.

"It is important that our strategy be rooted in a thorough analysis of consumer data—understanding consumption patterns, sentiments, and sensitivities—while also implementing a strong framework to effectively manage reputational risks", states Shreela Roy, Lead – Digital Communications, RP Sanjiv Goenka Group

The North Eastern states of Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim present a diverse demographic profile with unique economic characteristics. According to the 2011 Census, the combined population of these states is approximately 14.5 million, representing about 3.78% of India's total population.⁵² Demographically, these states are characterized by a predominantly rural population and a high proportion of tribal communities. For instance, Mizoram has the highest literacy rate among these states at 91.33%, while Arunachal Pradesh has the lowest at 65.38%.⁵³

State	Population (2024)	Area (km²)	Density (/km²)	Sex Ratio	Literacy Rate	Rural Population	Urban Population
Arunachal Pradesh	13.83 million	83,743	17	938	65.38%	8.70 million	2.27 million
Assam	36.97 million	78,438	397	958	72.19%	23.21 million	34.39 million
Manipur	28.55 million	22,327	122	992	79.21%	15.90 million	5.75 million
Meghalaya	29.66 million	22,429	132	989	74.43%	18.64 million	4.54 million
Mizoram	10.97 million	21,081	52	976	91.33%	4.47 million	4.41 million
Nagaland	19.78 million	16,579	119	931	79.55%	16.47 million	3.42 million
Sikkim	6.10 million	7,096	86	890	81.42%	4.80 million	59,870
Tripura	36.73 million	10,486	350	960	91.58%	26.39 million	15.34 million

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52. <https://www.mha.gov.in/en/commoncontent/north-east-division>
53. <https://www.mha.gov.in/en/commoncontent/north-east-division>

"The final imperative is continuous adaptation. Rigorous performance measurement isn't just about metrics—it's about maintaining a living, breathing communication strategy that evolves with audience dynamics. Regular insights-driven iterations ensure messaging remains relevant, impactful, and deeply connected to local contexts", Moharana remarks.



The purchasing power in these states varies but is generally lower than the national average. As of 2022-23, Sikkim had the highest per capita income among these states at \$6,900, while Manipur had the lowest at \$1,070.⁵⁴ Their largely agrarian economies and traditional lifestyles influence spending patterns in these states. However, urban centres are seeing a shift towards modern consumer goods and services.⁵⁵ The region faces economic challenges due to geographical isolation and limited industrialization. However, government initiatives like the North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS) aim to boost economic growth and consumer spending.⁵⁶ These states also have unique cultural factors influencing consumer behaviour, such as the prevalence of local handicrafts and traditional textiles in Manipur and Nagaland, which form a significant part of consumer spending.

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54. <https://www.mha.gov.in/en/commoncontent/north-east-division>
55. https://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Factsheet_HCES_2022-23.pdf
56. <https://dpiit.gov.in/policies-and-schemes/north-east-industrial-development-scheme>

MEDIA LANDSCAPE & OUTLOOK

- MEDIA CONSUMPTION PATTERNS
– DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA, PRINT & BROADCAST, REGIONAL MEDIA
- MEDIA SPEND, REVENUE MODELS
- TRENDS OR CHANGING PREFERENCES

When television sets conquered Indian homes and minds in the '90s it gave rise to a huge class of "captive audience". It was a one-way communication channel, where millions tuned in together to watch their favourite shows or watch news on prime time. From the creation of mascots (the Pillsbury doughboy, Pizza Corner's Zappi) to memorabilia (Boomer's tattoos, Cheetos cards), this class was an obedient consumer. Brands often attempt to recreate this decade through manufactured nostalgia reflected in advertising (Maggi, Amul) and products (Paper Boat). Marketers and advertisers were on a roll in the '90s, with brands encouraging consumers to aim higher, and desire more. Despite being no outsider to challenges, change and crises, the digital revolution has thrown a curve ball to both the consumer and the marketer – there are no rules to this game, it evolves constantly, and the directions change in real time! It has pushed everyone into a new age, where consumer attention is the most valuable commodity, where brands vie for it, and influencers monetise it – it is the age of attention.⁵⁷

"Chief Communication Officers must architect a multifaceted approach that seamlessly integrates traditional and digital platforms, recognizing that credibility emerges through nuanced, culturally intelligent storytelling. Success demands linguistic and cultural fluency. Content must transcend mere translation, embodying local communication rhythms and sensitivities. By cultivating deep relationships with journalists and influencers, organizations transform external narratives from monologues to meaningful dialogues. In today's hyperconnected landscape, agility is non-negotiable. A robust crisis communication strategy isn't just a contingency—it's a real-time capability to navigate complex media ecosystems. Platform-specific optimization ensures messages resonate authentically, whether through investigative print journalism or rapid social media engagement", details Moharana.

While digital penetration has an outreach of 600 million, and 80% of YouTube is watched on mobile screens, there is so much more to uncover. Digital is not eating into the pie of other mediums but adds to it at the industry level. There are opportunities galore – a third of India does not have a television, and over half do not yet use social media.⁵⁸ Broadly classified into 4 categories – text (newspapers, online papers, forums), video (television, social media, OTT), audio (radio, podcasts, music, audio streaming), experiential (VR, gaming, cinemas, events), the Media and Entertainment (M&E) industry is reinventing and redefining itself across all categories. From revenue models to content delivery, targeted marketing, and consumer engagement – everything is changing.

80 per cent of newspaper revenues in India come from advertising, against revenues of 50–60 per cent in global markets. Text trends show that online reach will continue growing, and print revenues will grow at a CAGR of 3.4%.⁵⁹ Audio trends predict a growing paid subscriber base, and improved international monetization, specifically driven by the consumer segment (unpaid, aspirational, premium).

"Regional & Trade media from traditional media. With new & social, there is a risk of overexposure or even over-messaging. There should be a balance between unique & collaborative content to keep the brand interesting for consumers. Leadership voice should be used to drive thought leadership & innovative strategies, rather than only communicating company milestones. A combination of these builds long-term credibility", explains Roy.

In the experiential category, online gaming is all set to grow across fantasy sports, e-sports, and casual gaming with revenue coming from in-app purchases and e-sport leagues. Video remains the largest earner, and with India set to have a billion screens by 2030, it is set to retain its position.⁶⁰

57. https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/14-055_2ef21e7e-7529-4864-b0f0-c64e4169e17f.pdf

58. https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/en_in/news/2024/03/ey-in-india-s-media-entertainment-sector-is-innovating-for-the-future-03-2024.pdf

59. https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/en_in/news/2024/03/ey-in-india-s-media-entertainment-sector-is-innovating-for-the-future-03-2024.pdf

60. https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/en_in/news/2024/03/ey-in-india-s-media-entertainment-sector-is-innovating-for-the-future-03-2024.pdf

BIHAR:

- Languages: Hindi, Urdu, Maithili, Bhojpuri
- Major newspapers: Hindustan (Hindi), Dainik Jagran, Prabhat Khabar
- Media houses: Hindustan Times group, Dainik Jagran group

JHARKHAND:

- Languages: Hindi, Santali, Ho, Mundari
- Major newspapers: Prabhat Khabar, Hindustan, Dainik Jagran
- Media houses: Neutral Publishing House (Prabhat Khabar)

WEST BENGAL:

- Languages: Bengali, Hindi, Nepali
- Major newspapers: Anandabazar Patrika (Bengali), The Telegraph (English)
- Media houses: ABP Group

ODISHA:

- Languages: Odia, Hindi
- Major newspapers: The Samaja, Dharitri (Odia)

ASSAM:

- Languages: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo
- Major newspapers: The Assam Tribune (English), Dainik Janambhumi (Assamese)

The other northeastern states of Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim have smaller, regional language newspapers alongside some English-language publications.

It is worth noting that national Hindi newspapers like Dainik Jagran, Dainik Bhaskar, and Hindustan have expanded into many of these states, especially in Bihar and Jharkhand. The media landscape in these regions is evolving, with a mix of local and national players competing for readership. Digital news portals are also growing in importance, particularly in Bihar. Some popular

digital news portals mentioned include Live Cities, First Bihar, Bihar Tak, news4nation, Janta Junction News, The Bihar Top, and The Bihar Today.



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CULTURAL TRENDS

- LANGUAGE, BELIEF SYSTEMS
- FESTIVALS & TRADITIONS
- DOS AND DON'TS – RIGHT AND WRONG MESSAGING

As brands wade into the high-speed, uncharted territory of digital, along with traditional television and print, effective localisation and cultural sensitivity have become more crucial. Remember the KFC outlet that refused to play a Kannada song and had to publicly apologise, or the “Chanda mama ghar ke” by ISRO during Chandrayaan 3 after a previously failed mission – keeping cultural sensibilities in mind demonstrates respect and creates genuine connections with the consumer base.

“Cultural, historical and religious sensitivities must be strongly considered while crafting content. Trivialising these can be equivalent to long-term reputational & business damage. The easiest way is to have a holistic working relationship with the brands & products teams, who delve into deeper consumer insights, leverage this intel for communications & content strategies”, says Roy.

Bihar, with its historical significance as the land of Buddha and home to the Nalanda, is deeply rooted in agricultural practices. Chhath Puja, a major festival dedicated to the Sun God, sees devotees offering prayers along riverbanks, marking it as a significant

cultural event. Other festivals like Makar Sankranti, Holi, and Diwali are celebrated with enthusiasm. The state is renowned for its folk traditions, such as Madhubani paintings and Bhojpuri folk songs, which highlight its artistic heritage. These cultural elements reflect the state’s agrarian lifestyle and spiritual ethos.

Jharkhand, carved out of Bihar in 2000, is home to over 30 indigenous tribes, each contributing to the state’s diverse cultural tapestry. Sarhul, a spring festival celebrating nature’s renewal, is one of Jharkhand’s most significant celebrations. Karma, another key festival, involves worshipping Karam Devta for a prosperous harvest. The state’s rich tribal culture is showcased through traditional dances like Chhau and Santhal. Jharkhand’s cuisine reflects its tribal roots with dishes like “dhuska” and “pittha”. Despite modernization, both Bihar and Jharkhand maintain their cultural heritage, blending ancient traditions with contemporary practices to celebrate their unique identities.

West Bengal celebrates its regional identity through a rich blend of cultural sophistication and artistic heritage. The Bengali consumer responds positively to

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messaging that appeals to their cultural pride and intellectual curiosity. The state’s cultural calendar is highlighted by Durga Puja, a grand festival that unites communities in celebration of art and tradition. Other significant festivals include Kali Puja, Saraswati Puja, and Poila Boishakh (Bengali New Year). West Bengal is also known for its classical dance forms like Kathak and vibrant folk traditions such as Baul music and Jatra theatre. The culinary landscape is equally rich, featuring dishes like “machher jhol” (fish curry), “shorshe ilish” (hilsa fish in mustard sauce), street food like “puchka” (pani puri) and “jhal muri”, urban staples like “roshagulla”, “rasmalai”, “mishti doi” and various sweets highlight the region’s legendary sweet tooth. This gastronomic heritage is often celebrated in marketing campaigns targeting Bengali consumers.

Assam, nestled in northeastern India, boasts a rich cultural tapestry woven from diverse ethnic influences. The Assamese identity, shaped by centuries of assimilation, encompasses various indigenous tribes, Indo-Aryan settlers, and immigrant communities. Bihu, the state’s most celebrated festival, marks different phases of the agricultural calendar and unites people across ethnic lines. The state’s cultural heritage is evident in its vibrant handloom traditions, particularly Assam silk, and classical dance forms like Sattriya. Assamese cuisine, characterized by its subtle flavours and use of fresh herbs, reflects the region’s agricultural abundance. The Vaishnava movement, led by Srimanta Sankardeva, has profoundly influenced Assamese art, literature, and social institutions, with namghars (prayer halls) becoming integral to community life.

The 7 sisters of the northeast – the states of Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim form a vibrant mosaic of cultures, each with its unique traditions and ethnic diversity. These states are home to over 200 distinct tribes, each contributing to the region’s rich cultural tapestry. Meghalaya, known for its matrilineal society, celebrates the Nongkrem Dance Festival, honouring the harvest. Arunachal Pradesh’s Ziro Festival of Music blends traditional and contemporary sounds, while Manipur’s Lai Haraoba festival showcases the state’s classical Manipuri dance.

“Communicators often misinterpret or generalize the cultural diversity of India’s East, overlooking linguistic, tribal, and socio-economic nuances, which can lead to tone-deaf messaging. Additionally, prioritizing mainstream perspectives over regional sensitivities may alienate local audiences. CCOs can address this by fostering cultural intelligence within teams, investing in regional experts, and implementing thorough research and feedback loops to ensure messaging is both inclusive and locally relevant”, points out Moharana.

Mizoram’s Chapchar Kut, a spring festival, features traditional bamboo dances. Nagaland’s Hornbill Festival, a celebration of tribal heritage, has become a major cultural event. Tripura’s Kharchi Puja, dedicated to the earth, reflects the state’s blend of tribal and Bengali influences. Sikkim’s Losar, the Tibetan New Year, highlights its Buddhist heritage. These states are renowned for their handloom and handicraft traditions, from Nagaland’s intricate beadwork to Manipur’s delicate Phanek weaves. The region’s cuisine is diverse, featuring unique ingredients

like bamboo shoots and fermented foods. Despite modernisation, these states maintain their distinct identities through language preservation, traditional attire, and ancient customs. The region's festivals, often tied to agricultural cycles, showcase vibrant dances, music, and rituals, offering a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of Northeast India.

The Indian PR industry is undergoing a notable transformation, marked by evolving attitudes and an adoption of new technologies, tools and ideas. One significant trend is the marked shift of PR from a supporting function to a strategic partner in achieving business objectives. There is also a clear movement towards prioritising tangible business outcomes over traditional media metrics. As organisations increasingly adopt a digital-first approach, the allocation of budgets towards PR is expected to rise, indicating a commitment to integrating comprehensive multi-channel strategies.

Regional PR in the context of the Eastern zone is evolving rapidly, presenting both opportunities and challenges. While certain pockets lag behind their counterparts in PR growth, the zone remains a potential market with untapped possibilities. The rise of hyperlocal digital news platforms is reshaping the media landscape, offering new avenues for PR practitioners to engage local audiences. As the region continues to develop, PR is adapting to the zone's unique linguistic and cultural diversity, leveraging local influencers and events to create authentic connections. The future of regional PR in Eastern India lies in embracing digital transformation while maintaining a deep understanding of local sensibilities.



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